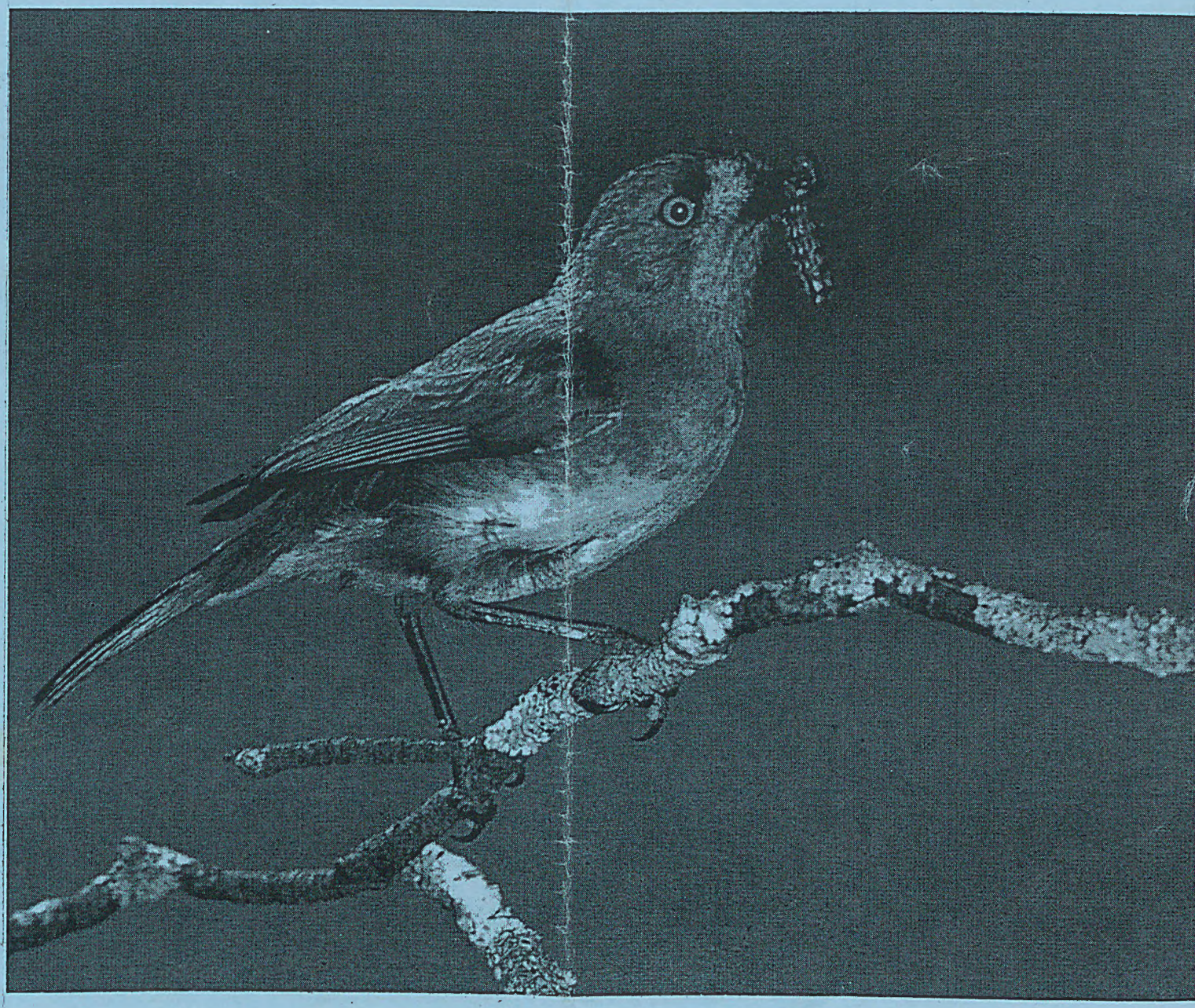
WHIRRAKEE

March 2005 Vol. 26 No. 2

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2004 - 2005

President	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Senior Vice President	Stuart Fraser	12 Bambara Close, Bendigo	
Junior Vice President	vacant		
Secretary	Bill Holsworth	13 Nabilla Crs, Bendigo e-mail:wholsworth@bigpond.com	5443 4063
Minute Secretary	Jane Cleary	24 Goynes Road, Epsom	5448 4396
	Jan Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
Treasurer	Stuart Fraser		
Membership Officer	Kate Lottkowitz	80 Piccaninny Rd, RSD Strathfieldsaye	5439 3157
Excursion organiser	done by the committee		
Syllabus organiser	Rod Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
Librarian	Diana Collier	31 Milroy Street, Bendigo	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens	82 Somerville Street, Bendigo e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Rob Moors, Maurie Lewis, Glenise Moors, Rod Orr, Bob Ruddick, and there are 3 vacancies.

Excursions Excursions are conducted irregularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active group that meets regularly (the Fauna Study Group) and other groups that meet at irregular intervals.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.
Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: This group has field excursions and the occasional lecture evening. Please consult the *Whirrakee* for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose meetings or excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front Cover Photographer: Rob Watkins
The February general meetings, the first for the year, are always a treat. This year again, there were many amazing images of members' holidays or favourite natural history aspects. Rob Watkins showed a selection of slides from a recent camping trip to the mallee, see article on page 4. This delicate little bird is a southern whiteface.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 26, No.2, March 2005

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

CONTENT

Item	Contributor	Page
Short notices		3
Fauna Study Group activities	Bill Holsworth	3
Quality, not just habitat	Rob Watkins	4
Book Review: Nest boxes for wildlife	Bill Holsworth	5
Turtle watching at Heron Island	Karen Bartlett-Thomas	5
News from the Portland area		
A zonal reserve system	M. Wood and D.Phillips	7
Cobboboonee to Kalingur	Geraldine Ryan	9
Campouts	SEANA	9
From the mailbag	Elaine Mathison	8
Speaker Syllabus for 2005	Rod Orr	10

Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles.
Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's note
A wonderful edition of Whirrakee. Thank you to all who have contributed. I would have liked to have included two further items: one is the letter written by Parks Victoria in response to Rob Watkins' concerns about fuel reduction burning in the mallee. This issue concerns many in the club at present, and it would have raised further discussion, no doubt. The other item would have been a survey form produced by the City of Greater Bendigo (Bendigo +25 Community Survey) to gauge residents' hopes and expectations for this city by 2030. Rod Orr had copies of these forms at the last general meeting and urged all members to fill these out. As many people as possible should express their concern about the diminishing natural environments around Bendigo. A front page article of 'The Advertiser' on February 23 also urged the community to participate in the survey. If anybody would like to do so, please phone 54346000 for a copy of the form, or visit the website www.bendigo.vic.gov.au. Lastly, the final management plan of the Terrick Terick NP has arrived. Bill Holsworth has a copy in case anybody wants to have a look at it.

BFNC Garden Working Bee

This year we again need regular garden working bees and they are usually held on the Saturday before each general meeting, at 9am.

The first working bee for 2005 will be on **Saturday 5th March, 9am**

All welcome

National Bird Conference in Bendigo

As there will be a national bird conference in Bendigo in late September/early October, it was suggested, at the last general meeting, to publish a special bird edition for September. So please, write up your bird stories and save them till then. They can however be sent any time and I will keep them for the September edition (if you indicate this).

Fauna Study Group Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at approximately 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

Fauna Study Group Campout

The group has had enjoyable excursions to Torrumbarry Lock and will be going there again this year to check the 10 nest boxes that were put there with the hope of attracting squirrel gliders.
Two years ago 23 people came. Members of the Club can go for one day, or go camping (fly proof gazebo, camp toilet and shower provided). Maurie Lewis is organizing the excursion and will be there from the 18th to 20th of March. They will be inspecting the nest boxes on Sat. 19th starting a 9:30 am and finishing about noon, followed by lunch (BYO) and bird watching near the camping area. Previously they have recorded over 40 bird species, including yellow rosellas, brown tree creepers, little friarbirds, and babblers.
A BBQ tea at 6 pm will be followed by spotlighting night life using artifical feeders (bring your flash camera), and calling owls with a tape. All activities will be at a leisurely pace.
For more details contact Maurie Lewis--Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. To get there from the Echuca – Gunbower Road, turn right about 30 km from Echuca onto the Torrumbarry Weir Road (Lock Road). Go 8 km north to the Torrumbarry Weir Caravan Park. Then follow the river road back towards Echuca (up river) for about 2-3 km. There will be pink ribbons marking our group's campsite. (Maurie's white Ute RUB277). There is no mobile reception at the camping area.

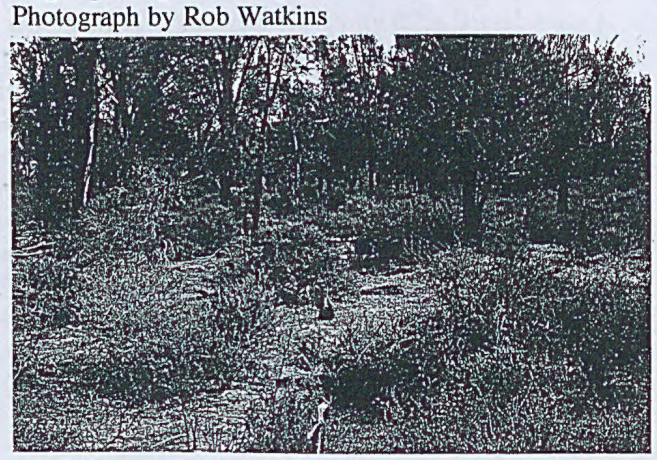
Plans for Wetlands at the White Hills Botanic Gardens

Wednesday, April 6 at 7.30pm

At the BFNC Clubrooms.

Anthony Sheen will talk about the draft plan for wetlands at the White Hills Botanic Gardens. All welcome.

High quality habitat for mallee birds
Photograph by Rob Watkins



Quality - not just habitat

by Rob Watkins

When I moved to Marnie Road in the Kennington region of Bendigo nearly fifty years ago, the haunting calls of crested bellbirds could be heard coming from three different areas of bushland.
Those calls are now but distant memories as homes crowd most of the intervening territory.
But the calls of many other birds are also just a memory from some areas where urban development has not been significant. Areas such as Kimbolton Forest, the Whipstick and Inglewood, where red-capped robins in particular have been in decline for many years.

At a meeting of the bird study group held before the 1982 drought, highly respected bird observers Mr John Ipsen, the late Mr John Kellam, Leon Ruedin and Hugh Milne estimated bird numbers generally had declined in the Bendigo region by approximately 85% during the previous fifty years.
While some may question the accuracy of the figure, few, I feel would question their judgement that our local birds were in a serious decline.
In my young days, regent honeyeaters were common in the ironbark trees lining the streets of Quarry Hill where I attended school during the late 1930s. Sadly, today, the sighting of a regent honeyeater would be a rare sighting indeed.
Because drought has been such an obvious problem for birds by diminishing their food supply for instance, other factors can easily be overlooked. Reducing habitat by clearing land to cater for an ever expanding population is an obvious threat to birds. Recently I was made acutely aware of the importance of the 'quality' of habitat.

Four enjoyable weeks were spent in a patch of very old mallee forest, isolated by vast areas of cereal cropping country on all sides. The time was last October, preceded by record-breaking drought.
Bird life was prolific, reminiscent of that enjoyed at Bendigo about sixty years ago. Even when a few days of high winds and unseasonal heat sent the mercury above the 40oC, tiny nestlings void of down continued to prosper. Parents had obviously access to an ample food supply.
Making comparisons with Bendigo bushland where bird numbers have plummeted was a natural progression
Two obvious factors were present in the mallee forest. The area had not been burnt for many years and a prolific understorey showed no signs of overgrazing. During four weeks, only two sightings were made of an eastern grey kangaroo.

Abundant hollows in very old eucalypts and belahs contained nesting mallee ringnecks, grass and mulga parrots, brown tree-creepers, galahs, eastern striated pardalotes and southern white face.
Barn and boobook owls and owlet nightjars sometimes fled from hollows, spooked into action by the crunching of leaf litter under my feet. The value of hollows provided by mature trees was so obvious.
Shoulder-high shrubs and young trees combined to provide a rich understorey for splendid wrens, white-browed babblers, red-capped and hooded robins, Jacky winters, spiny-cheeked and singing honeyeaters.
Below belah trees a thick mat of fallen foliage provided ideal habitat for grubs and insect life. Parent birds had no bother keeping up a supply of caterpillars for demanding young, while the brightly coloured fruits of satiny blue-bush were collected by honeyeaters and tree-creepers.
The unburnt and ungrazed understorey supplied food for a prolific number of nesting birds, and the necessary cover for a surprisingly good success rate considering the presence of pied butcher birds and the mallee form of grey currawong.
In stark contrast, the understorey locally has suffered drastically from over-grazing by kangaroos and wallabies benefiting from a large increase in dams. The resultant availability of water has enabled their numbers to reach unprecedented levels.
The effects of over-grazing are clearly evident in forest beside Mangana Lane at Lyall Glen, where two small enclosures protect foliage over one metre in height. Grazing by kangaroos and wallabies has reduced vegetation outside the compounds to little more than bare earth.

A column of smoke visible from my campsite indicated NPs were carrying out an advertised fuel reduction burn in the Murray-Sunset NP.
I voiced my concern to the Mildura office of NPs, expressing dismay they chose to conduct a burn at the height of the birds' breeding

activities, after years of prolonged drought had provided opportunities for autumn of winter burns (*unfortunately there was insufficient space to include Park Victoria's response, ed.).*

Whilst I appreciate the damage that wildfires can cause, the damage caused by 'control burns' incinerating nesting birds is totally unacceptable.
Better planning and more skills are urgently needed as recent fuel reduction burning adjacent to Inglewood Rifle Range displayed. Liasion with local field naturalist could have avoided the destruction of the rare southern scrub robin, known to have been nesting there at the time.
Forest floor litter regarded as fuel for burning also contains life-giving food for birds.

Nest Boxes for Wildlife; a practical guide. By Alan and Stacey Franks. Published 2003 by Bloomings Books, Melbourne. 71 pages. Available in the Goldfields Library (Bendigo Public Library, 639.9 FRA). Review by Bill Holsworth, Feb. 2005.

The book starts by quoting Ian Mackay's little poem.'Where Home is a Hollow'

The gnarled old tree in the forest stood,
More important than just cubic metres of wood.
For the trunk and branches were quite full of 'hollers',
That you couldn't put a value on... at least not in dollars.

The authors tell us that twenty percent of Australian wildlife are obligate hollow users, and old growth forests, essential for the bird, mammals, reptiles, bees, and other wildlife, have been seriously depleted. The second chapter lists the requirements of natural hollows used by the more common birds and mammals. The next chapter has some suggestions for placing nest boxes in trees and their management (e.g. removal of bees).

Chapter 4 gets down to the details of dimensions of boxes for different species, patterns, and construction. Chapters 5 and 6 are short but give some suggestions about nest boxes in the garden and in farm forestry. The inside back page has a colour photo of a 'Hollow Log Gnome' that alone makes this book worth picking up.

Turtle Watching at Heron Island ~

Author: Karen Bartlett-Thomas

After a 2.5 hour boat trip from Gladstone to Heron Island in what was a 30 knot wind and 2.5 to 3 metre swell with nearly everyone down for the count with seasickness, we arrived at a guano smelling, *Black Noddy Tern* cacophony, *'piece of heaven'*. What was meant to be a dream turtle-watching holiday on the National Park islands of Heron and the even smaller Wilson, turned out to be an overnight stay on Heron and a bumpy dash back to the mainland to beat the ensuing cyclone the next day.

Heron Island is a 18 hectare coral cay lying on the Tropic of Capricorn in the Great Barrier Reef. Wilson Island 15 km north of Heron is only 2.5 hectares ...only 12 people can stay at a time on Wilson in luxury tents and pretend to be Robinson Crusoe for a while. Alas for us, Wilson Island will have to wait until next January; the best month for wildlife action....from coral spawning & bird nesting to witnessing the laying and hatching of Green & Loggerhead turtles.

On Heron, bird life has no concept of fear in man. Black Noddy Terns nest in almost every tree; making their nests from the Pandanus & Pisonia leaves cemented together with their droppings. They perch with their delicate webbed feet curled intimately around the branches and are not the least bit concerned about our presence. Even more so are the cheeky Buff Banded Rails that run under your feet and have learnt to stand at the restaurant doors for an opportunity to dash inside for a fare of crumbs.

There is no such thing as peace and quiet on this island getaway; with the Wedge Tail Shearwaters nesting under our feet and the noddies nesting overhead; their calls were incessant...we should have realised from the earplugs that were supplied in our rooms.

This is birdlife paradise.

Many birds were happy to share their island with us; from Eastern Reef Egrets, both white and grey forms who wandered about unperturbed, to Ruddy Turnstones, Sacred Kingfishers, and Silver Gulls..... but there are many others yet to be discovered on our return

next year; birds such as the Crested and Bridled Terns, White Breasted Sea Eagles, Brown Boobies, Bar Tailed Godwits and Lesser Golden Plovers. It was of interest to learn, that resident Silvereyes on this island have evolved into a much larger sized sub species than their mainland cousins.

Our rooms for the night were located on the beachfront, with Shearwater nesting holes at the doorstep and turtle tracks abundant from the previous night activities.

On our only night there we were delighted to the treat of watching these 1 metre diameter mounds move slowly out of the water and up the beach, in front of our rooms. In the few hours we spent watching, we had 8 turtles visiting our little section of beach...we were told that they had counted 120 on the previous night. These slow and majestic creatures were Green Turtles *(Chelonia mydas)*... we knew this, as they moved up the beach using their front flippers together at the same time ...Loggerheads *(Caretta caretta)* tend to waddle using an alternating flipper action...strangely enough their hatchlings do the complete opposite.

We were fortunate that night, to come across a researcher from Brazil and were informed that Loggerheads prefer to nest on mainland beaches. They make up to 2% of breeding turtles on coral cays and feed on crustaceans and molluscs; whilst Greens prefer to dine on alga and jellyfish. We also learnt that there are 2 populations of turtles on Heron; a resident population that migrate away to specific breeding grounds every 2 to 8 years and a breeding population that travel 3000 km (up to 70 km /day) from Indonesia & New Caledonia to Heron every 4 to 6 years.

Our little party had the most spectacular viewing of a female laying her prize right in front of our room. Apparently turtles pick their nesting sites from the sea...and can be seen poking their heads out of the water to find their spot.... lucky for us this girl picked our doorstep. As turtles can only hear very low frequencies this girl had no idea of our shouts of excitement when she actually started to lay. Although easily disturbed by lights and activity, once they start laying not much can disturb them...so we were able to shine our torch to get a better viewing.

Our newfound researcher turned out to be an excellent guide and informed us that turtles don't start laying until they are 30. He ascertained from her tag on a front flipper that she was at least 60 years old and has another 20 years left.

This old girl would have mated with multiple partners at sea early in the season, coming into lay her first clutch several weeks later then back every 2 or 3 weeks for another laying...this is probably her 3rd or 4th go at it....our guide tells us that some come in without laying only to return later in the evening or perhaps the next night.

We were mesmerised with her laying procedure. After scooping out a body pit with all 4 flippers (we learnt quickly not to stand too close behind her in this section of the operation for fear of being spray-painted with sand) ..... she began to rhythmically dig a nesting hole with her back flippers...this was a precise operation where she used each flipper in turn to scoop and flick out sand, not stopping until she had dug approx 40 cm deep by 20 cm diameter hole. With each new dig she would put in a cursory flick with her flipper just to make sure not to put sand back in the hole ...what meticulous care!!!

For the next half hour she kindly deposited into the nest approximately 120 ping pong sized, soft shelled eggs, completely filling the hole. With no rest she then reversed the procedure and backfilled the hole with her hind limbs. Once filled she continued to rhythmically paddle the sand with her hind flippers for the next 10 to 15 minutes - a process that reminded us of the folding process in cake making. We can only guess this may be an aerating process to supply oxygen for the hatchlings as they dig their way out of the nest, 55 days later.

Her final duty was to fill in the body pit and make her way back to the sea. We lost track of the time but we were informed that the entire process takes up to 3 hours. It didn't seem that long but time flies when you are having fun.

Later that evening another turtle disturbed a nest and to our delight out popped six hatchlings. We were most determined that these little creatures would definitely make it to the waterline, as earlier that day we had witnessed gulls feasting on a massive hatch.... not to mention a young Lemon Shark that was

circumnavigating the shoreline setting itself up to feast as well. Normally turtles hatch at night when the sand temperature drops, however with the bad weather the temperature had dropped enough in the afternoon to stimulate a hatch....an amazing sight to see hundreds of soft shelled 10 cm diameter baby Greens navigate the dunes and rocks to meet the waves. They do this by using the light horizons to orientate themselves to sea. The lowest light horizons are always over the sea so we were warned to be careful with torches and also to turn off any outside lights so as not to confuse them.

It was so hard not to interfere and give them assistance into the water but at least our presence helped scare off the Gulls that afternoon. We couldn't help ourselves though with one little fella that had an underdeveloped front flipper. It was destined to go in circles so to speak. We named it Barbara after one of our party and carried it down to the water hoping it would make the arduous journey out to sea.

This is a magical place even with torrential rains and huge winds we were enthralled by the wildlife and look forward to next January, with sunny skies, white sands and azure seas .....we hope!!!

News from the Portland area

A zonal reserve system for the forests of the Portland Forest Management Area Cobboboonee State Forest

by Matthew Wood and Doug Phillips

Editor's note: the document named above was prepared for the Victorian State Government and the Department of Sustainability and Environment by the Portland Field Naturalists' Club to incorporate a zonal reserve system relational to future conservation status of the forests of the Portland Forest Management Area. The suggested zones are based on the box-ironbark model, so this proposal was thought to be of interest to our members. It needs a lot of support and the more widely known it becomes, the better.
A copy of the document can be provided if required. Please contact Sabine Wilkens or Stuart Fraser (contact details on the inside front cover of the Whirrakee).

This is the 'Executive Summary' of the document:
The Portland Field Naturalists' Club Inc (PFNC), through this document, is recommending to the Victorian State Government and the Department of Sustainability and Environment to manage the forests currently making up the Portland Forest Management Area (PFMA) with the maintenance of biodiversity as the highest priority. Commercial logging and wood chipping would not resume in the forests of the PFMA under this proposal; also the 'General Management Zone' classification currently existing in local state forests would no longer apply.
The PFNC have recognised the many different recreational users who currently have access to the forest of the PFMA and seek to accommodate those pursuits in a zonal forest reserve system, as well as transitional firewood collecting needs.
The PFNC proposes four different zones for the management of the forests of the PFMA:
* Priority Conservation Zone
* High Conservation Zone
* Recreation Zone
* Transitional Firewood Zone

The members of the Portland Field Naturalists' Club through this document acknowledge that the forests of the PFMA are designated as state forests at this time and also note the statuary limitations of the current Portland/Horsham Forest Management Plan process. However, with a view to the long-term maintenance of forest biodiversity and the increased legislative protection provided the PFNC believes that permitted uses in the existing Parks Victoria system can be adapted to accommodate such a zonal forest system through a combination of National, State and Regional Parks, while still catering for all existing recreational pursuits, as well as transitional fire wood collection.

N.B. the PFMA encompasses around 100 000 hectares of scattered state forest that extend from Portland to north of Casterton, across to the South Australian border and to the east of Warnambool. These forests and woodlands are vital in the protection of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystem functioning and play an important role in the provision of water catchments and opportunities for recreation and eco-tourism.

From the Mailbag
Author: Elaine Mathison

Each month the club receives a number of newsletters and magazines: some by subscription and some in exchange for Whirrakee. These are available from the club library.

* * * * * * *

THE BIRD OBSERVER(BOCA)
December 2004

"....Carnarvon Gorge, Queensland" tells of a visit to this small part of the large Carnarvon National Park in western Queensland. The Gorge is cut into sandstone on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range and contains a variety of habitats for the abundant bird life.

"Spreading our Wings: education around the country" reports on the many educational activities in schools initiated by BOCA groups.

"Landscapes for Wildlife: corridors, buffers and stepping stones" describes the different types of vegetation links which allow wildlife to move more safely through the landscape. Helpful suggestions are given for urban residents.

February 2005

"So Many Birds - so little effort" reports on a visit to Chanhassen, near Minneapolis in north-central USA. The bird life was prolific and varied, both in urban areas and around the many lakes in the area.

"Australian Bustard: captive breeding program" outlines the effort being made at Serendip, near Lara, to increase the numbers of this endangered species. After early success in building the number of birds from 12 in 1965/65 to 68 in the 1980s the breeding program declined, but has recently been revived.

"One hundred years of bird observing" includes a number of articles concerning the history of BOCA, this year celebrating its centenary.

* * * * * * *

PARKWATCH(VNPA)
December 2004

"Victorian catchment management: a new focus" by Nick Roberts who heads the VNPA campaign to create a major national park at Barmah-Millewa on the Murray River. He explains how the government can meet environmental targets by conserving natural values on both public and private land.

"Chiltern-Mount Pilot National Park - recovering from the 2003 fires" by Richard Skinner outlines what has happened to the flora and fauna since the fire. Park structures have been repaired or replaced, and plant growth has begun. Many Black Cypress-pine seedlings have appeared and the eucalypts are regenerating.

"Victoria's marine national parks - two years on" reports on progress since their establishment, with particular stress on involving the community in monitoring and planning.

* * * * * * *

Also received recently:

Castlemaine Naturalist(CFNC)

Ballarat Naturalist(BFNC)

Geelong Naturalist(GFNC)

Sun-Nat(Sunraysia FNC)

Field Nats News(FNCV)

Land for Wildlife News

Plains Wanderer(Echuca & District BOCA)

Ripples(Aust.Platypus Conservancy)

Fungimap Newsletter

Annual Report Summary(Parks Victoria)

* * * * * * *

News from the Portland area .....continued
Cobboboonee to Kalingur - connecting a fragmented land

by Geraldine Ryan

Editor's note: In another initiative, a poster/leaflet with the above name has been produced by Geraldine Ryan with the support of ACF's Woodlands Conservation Fund and Environment Victoria. The (very attractive) poster explains the plan to protect remaining fragments of remnant vegetation between Portland and the Little Desert National Park. Here is an extract from it:

"From the yellow gums of Kalingur, past the brown stringys of Dergholm, to the messmates of Cobboboonee, as the 'Age' journalist Clare Miller wrote: "there is still the chance to secure a lifeline for endangered habitats in the landscape".
Like the precious stones of a chunky health bracelet, the remaining woodland and native forest blocks that survived the clearing and logging, adorn what is now and agricultural landscape. They form a north-south lifeline, a linking corridor. If protected, that is. For currently, the reserved parts of this lifeline are isolated and form only fragments of the potential biodiversity health curve that could stretch from the Cobboboonee heart to the Kalingur semi-desert fringe. It is clear big blocks such as the Cobboboonee, Drajurk, Dergholm and Kalingur that are vital to the habitat lifeline and that should be protected first. But so too are small 'island' fragments, such as the Connewirricoo woodlads or Homerton with its habitat of rare herb-rich forest and protective bracken understorey.

In a fragmented landscape small patches of bush assume are of ecological importance far beyond their size. These 'chunky bits of the bracelet's lifeline chain' are the refuges for all kinds of species when there is nowhere else to go. This bracelet of biodiversity public blocks, albeit damaged, running north-south, is what we need to protect and reconnect. The connection could form a great corridor and migration path so that in this time of global warming and during droughts and fires, there is a place to go for the species that remain and may return to this region."

South Eastern Australian Naturalists' Association
The next two Campouts.....

The Upper Goulburn FNC's **Autumn Campout** is nearly upon us.
Friday 11th March to Monday 14th March 2005.

If you can attend spontaneously at this stage, get in touch with the contact below (or with Rob and Glenise Moors who will be attending).

Enquiries please direct to either Joan Edwards (Semmens), President, 20 Webster Street Alexandra 3714 phone 03 5772 1542 or Lorrain Pyke, Secretary, 149 Crystal Creek Road Alexandra 3714 phone 03 5772 1189.

2006 ANN Get-Together
Some time ago, we also received the first circular for the **2006 Australian Naturalists' Network Get-Together.** This will be hosted by SEANA and held in the Australian High Country from 16th January to 2nd February 2006.
Due to the pressure on accommodation during this time of year in the High Country, SEANA is looking for anybody who firmly knows that they will attending this event. If not enough people show interest at this stage, the accommodation cannot be booked.

If you are interested in responding at this stage, Bill Holsworth has copies of the response sheet required. This, along with a 50 dollar deposit needs to be sent off as soon as possible. The deposit money will be refunded should the get-together not go ahead due to lack of numbers.
It is estimated that the total cost will be about 1500 dollars for the 17 days (based on previous dwell).

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Guest Speaker Syllabus for General Meetings 2005
Second Wednesday of the month, 8:00 pm

Please check each **WHIRRAKEE** for additional events or changes.
The general meeting will start at 7:30pm, with the speaker being introduced at 8:00pm.

Date - 2005	Topic	Speaker
March 9	'Semi-arid Australia - Mallee Vegetation'	Ern Perkins
April 13	'Conservation of the Koala'	Rolf Schlagloth (Australian Koala Foundation)
May 11	'Mapping of remnant natural vegetation in NW Victoria'	Alison Oates
June 8	'Fungi of the Box-Ironbark forests and the Fungimap project'	Tom May
July 13	'Co-operative breeding behaviour of tree-creepers (with particular reference to the White-browed Tree-creeper)'	Jim Radford
August 10	'Pink-tailed Worm-lizard, Hooded Scalyfoot and other rare reptiles'	Peter Robertson
September 14	AGM 'Studies of the edge effect in Box-Ironbark forest'	Zoe Pocock and Ruth Lawrence
October 12	'Owls of the World'	David Hollands
November 9	'Xanthorrhoea - ecology and flowering'	Mark Bellette
December 14	Christmas Diner. 'Some environmental observation from places visited overseas'	Bill Holsworth

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings

Wednesday, March 9 7.30pm
Ern Perkins is well-known to many members. The topic of his talk will be 'Semi-arid Australia - mallee vegetation.

Wednesday. April 13 7.30pm
Rolf Schlagloth from the Australian Koala Foundation will talk about 'Conservation of the Koala'.

Fauna Group

This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.
The following is a guide for the discussion topics for this year's meetings (subject to change).

Mar.23rd - Echidna
Apr 27th - Symbiotic Relationships
May 25th - Termites
Jun 22nd - Koala
Jul 27th - Scat identification

Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at approximately 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

March Campout

Weekend of March 18-20.
Activities planned are checking nest boxes, bird watching and spotlighting. Come for weekend or just for the day.
Please see article on page 3 for details.

Plans for Wetlands at the White Hills Botanic Gardens

Wednesday, April 6 7.30pm

At the BFNC Clubrooms.

Anthony Sheen will talk about the draft plan for wetlands at the White Hills Botanic Gardens.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Bendigo Field Naturalists on the web

http://communitysites.impulse.net.au/bendigofieldnaturalists/fnats.html

Any comments are most welcome.